

REMARKS

This Response is submitted in reply to the Office Action mailed on April 23, 2004. Claims 1-15 are currently pending in this application. Claims 1-4, 6-9 and 11 have been amended. Claims 5 and 12-15 have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. New claims 16-21 have been added. No new matter has been added by the amendments made herein.

In the Office Action, the Information Disclosure Statement filed on October 17, 2000 was objected to and claims 1-4, 9 and 12-15 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a). Claims 5-8, 10 and 11 were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim.

As a preliminary matter, Applicant has submitted an English Abstract of Japanese Document No. 10-254883 and an English translation of the Hashida article. Applicant respectfully requests that the Patent Office re-considers same. Applicant respectfully submits that the objection to the Information Disclosure Statement is now moot.

Claims 1-4, 9 and 12-15 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,243,723 to Ikeda et al. ("*Ikeda*") in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,943,669 to Numata ("*Numata*"). Applicant has amended claim 1 to include the element of claim 5. Applicant has also amended claim 9 to include the element of claim 10 and canceled claims 12, 13, 14 and 15. Applicant therefore respectfully submits that the rejection of claims 1-4, 9 and 12-15 is now moot.

Claims 5-8, 10 and 11 were objected to and will be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the elements of the base claim and the intervening claims. As described above, claim 1 was amended to include the element of objected claim 5. Therefore, amended claim 1 and claims 2-4 and 6-8 which depend from amended claim 1, are now in condition for allowance.

As described above, claim 9 was amended to include the element of objected claim 10. Accordingly, amended claim 9 and claim 11, which depends from amended claim 9, are now in condition for allowance.

New claim 16 includes the elements of claim 1 and objected claim 6. Therefore, Applicants respectfully submit that new claim 16 and new claims 17-21, which depend from new claim 16, are each in condition for allowance.

In light of the above, Applicant respectfully submits that claims 1-4, 6-9, 11 and new claims 16-21 are patentable and non-obvious over the art of record. Accordingly, Applicant

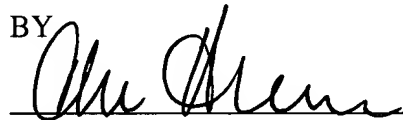
respectfully requests that claims 1-4, 6-9, 11 and new claims 16-21 be deemed allowable at this time and that a timely Notice of Allowance be issued in this case.

No fees are due in this case. If any other fees are due in connection with this application as a whole, the Patent Office is authorized to deduct the fees from deposit account number 02-1818. If such a withdrawal is made, please indicate the attorney docket number (113184-005) on the account statement.

Respectfully submitted,

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